



Transportation
Security
Administration

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Press Release

TSA Gears Up for Holiday Season Air Travel

Partnerships with travelers remain 'the key to success,' says Admiral Stone

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) is moving to duplicate, over the upcoming Holiday Season, the short wait times at security checkpoints that air travelers experienced over Thanksgiving. Data collected by TSA over the Thanksgiving Holiday showed an average passenger wait time of 12 minutes during peak travel periods, with overall wait times averaging less than four minutes. Year-end holiday travel typically is not as concentrated as Thanksgiving, but offers other challenges including families traveling together and the need to move gifts through security systems.

Rear Adm. David M. Stone, USN (Ret.), Assistant Secretary of Homeland Security for TSA, emphasized the need for travelers and families to be prepared for security screening, and requested that passengers not go to the airport with wrapped packages. He also reminded passengers not to take firearms and ammunition through the checkpoint in their carry-on luggage.

“TSA’s success this Holiday Season depends upon our continued partnership with the traveling public and aviation stakeholders,” he said. “TSA pledges to do all it can to ensure security and provide excellent customer service. Passengers need to prepare themselves and their families ahead of time for the airport security process, and not bring any prohibited items like firearms and ammunition to the checkpoint.”

When traveling with children, being ready to go through the checkpoint can be a huge timesaver. If alarms are set off, additional screening takes approximately three minutes per person, on average. A conversation with children in advance of airport security may also be helpful. At the checkpoint, children will need to temporarily part with such things as blankets and stuffed animals, and older children need to know that any comment suggesting a threat to an aircraft or its passengers is taken seriously by TSA screeners.

TSA encourages all travelers to visit its web site at www.TSA.gov. The Web site has lists of Permitted and Prohibited Items as well as good seasonal advice, and information for families traveling with children.

The security environment essentially remains unchanged since September 2004 when TSA announced it was increasing the use of explosives trace detectors, expanding the use of manual pat-down searches, and referring more passengers for additional screening based on visual observations by screeners, even if an alarm has not gone off. As always, passengers have the right to a private screening.

TSA’s checkpoint protocols now require all passengers to remove outer coats and jackets for X-ray before proceeding through the metal detectors. That includes suit and sport coats, athletic warm-up jackets and blazers. If a sports coat or blazer is being worn as the innermost garment – not over a blouse or sweater, for example – it does not have to come off.

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Other important TSA travel tips to help travelers and their families be prepared for the security process include:

- As you wait in line at the security checkpoint, place all metal items in a carry-on bag and take laptops and video cameras out of their cases.
- To minimize the risk of damage or loss, don't pack fragile or valuable items in checked baggage. Take them with you in carry-on baggage, or ship them to your destination instead.
- Put undeveloped film in carry-on baggage because equipment used to screen checked baggage will damage film. Also, high-speed and specialty film should not be put through X-ray machines, so passengers may ask screeners at the checkpoint to physically inspect film.
- You are NOT REQUIRED to remove your shoes before you enter the walk-through metal detector. However, TSA screeners encourage you to remove them because many types of footwear – including boots, platform shoes, and footwear containing metal or having a thick sole or heel – will require additional screening even if the metal detector DOES NOT alarm.
- Do not wear jewelry, shoes or clothing that may set off metal detector alarms.
- Get to the airport in plenty of time.
- Remember to put identification tags in and on all baggage including laptops.
- Everyone, even frequent fliers, should double check the contents of their pockets and bags, particularly carry-on luggage, to ensure no prohibited items were inadvertently packed.
- Passengers selected for additional screening have the right to request that it is done in a private location.
- Do not overpack bags. If screeners have to open them, closing overstuffed bags can be difficult and may result in that checked bag being delayed until a later flight.
- If TSA screeners need to open a locked bag for inspection, they may have to break the lock. There are now products on the market that have uniform locking systems that enable screeners to open and relock a bag. Passengers without such devices may still want to consider leaving bags unlocked.

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